Bicycle chases, adventures in the creek, and hours spent on the trampoline were the pillars of my typical childhood in the suburbs of Atlanta. My father was a country boy from Indiana who fell in love with the wild, southern through-and-through woman who I am lucky to call my mother. My mother left her life of Atlanta and my parents settled on the town of Lawrenceville to raise their family, complete with a col-de-sac and neighborhood kids galore.

My mother grew up dirt poor, about as poor as a person can get without being considered homeless, but made her own way, attending the University of Georgia on full scholarship and working her way up into a law firm in Atlanta. What she really longed for, however, was to raise a family of her own and give her children the childhood she never had. When her and my father set out for Lawrenceville, they achieved just that.

I spent my early years playing with the variety of neighborhood kids on my street, climbing trees, making tee-pees from tree limbs, racing out to the creek behind our house. Chalk, jump ropes and razor scooters were the staples of my childhood, as laughter and imagination reigned supreme in my world. Church on Sundays and after-school snacks were things I could always count on. I was given everything a child could ever need in a childhood, taught how to think for myself but get along with others, and imagine worlds beyond my own. Growing up in house based on love, support, and the value of figuring out things in your own way, I learned the value of creativity, individualism, and friendship. My parents always taught me that it’s the people around you, not how much money you have or the things you own, that truly matter.

Now that I’m older, I look back and see how my upbringing really shaped who I am. My neighborhood friends have since moved away, each leading different lives, but the memories shall remain until the end of time. Without my parents and all my dear friends, I would not be the creative, adventurous person I am today. The little cul-de-sac of Presidents Drive will always be home to me, and will forever be the place where I learned not only who I was but more importantly, who I wanted to be.